

CROSSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS THROUGH TRANSLATION

—SHASHI JAIN

Wouldn't it be nice if there was only one language spoken in the whole world? All children could enjoy then the entire literature available in the world. The great treasure hidden in books could be explored easily. But alas, it is not so! However, children can still enjoy the good books of the world through translations of children's literature in various languages.

Due to modern means of communication, peoples of the world are coming closer every day. Even then, it is not possible to explore the entire world in one's lifetime. But through books one can get various necessary information about what is happening in different parts of the world.

Children particularly enjoy reading in their mother tongue. They either don't know any other language or they are not fluent enough. The only way to satisfy their thirst for knowledge is by translating the original works into the various languages of the world.

Translation does not mean a word to word transformation. It is actually recreating a literary work into another language. It should be read fluently, otherwise a reader is apt to find it boring and the whole effort would be wasted. It is a delicate job to maintain the actual essence of the text.

Translators are called the 'cultural ambassadors' of a country. Through translation, he or she is transferring the views and culture of one place to the other. The translation of books enables the reader to know much about the habits, social customs, way of life, eating habits, costumes, and socio economic conditions

of other people. It broadens the vision of children. Many new dimensions are thus opened.

A translator's job is as difficult as the original writer's. The translator must have a good command of both the languages. He or she should be familiar with the cultural background of the original work as well as for whom he is translating. As written words have a lasting impact on young readers so translating children's books need special care. A translator must always keep in mind the requirements of the age group of the children for which the book is meant. As a young child has limited vocabulary, translation should be done in simple and lucid language. Therefore, it is better if the translator translates a book in to his mother tongue or into a language over which he has equal command.

Many times translations are done through the medium language. For example, Tagore's original Bengali literature was translated into English first and then into other languages. Russian literature is widely available in India and it is accepted too, especially the folk tales. Most of the Russian literature has come through the medium of English. In the same way, we can reach out to other languages also.

In developed countries children enjoy lots of books, while few titles are published in developing countries. A child in the west is able to enjoy the latest science fiction. Why not children in the other parts of the world too? Only translations can help in bringing the latest books to all the children of the world. To translate children's books, more people should be trained by

holding workshops or organising exchange programmes.

Literature, especially children's literature, should not be the property of one language. It should be the heritage of the children of the whole world. We, who are discussing children's literature here, should try to translate as many good books for children as possible. Tagore and Shakespeare cannot be tied down within boundary walls. Let us cross the language barriers through translation.

It is not possible to translate every book in every language. So it is most important to decide what should be translated. In other words what should be the criterion to select the titles for translation?

One can enumerate the following:

- * Books on universal themes as love, affection, courage, honesty, truthfulness etc.
- * Concept books (*Circle* by Manorama Jafa)
(*Story of Zero* by Dilip Salwi)
- * Informative books as they tell only the facts
- * Picture books where the text is simple and short
- * Folk tales which have universal appeal.

Some forms of literature are really difficult to translate as:

- Humour, because humour lies in the nuance of language
- Poetry, where rhyme and rhythm are the basic requirements. It is not easy to keep the same in other languages. Only ideas can be adopted.

So it is important to see that the selection of titles is done by a team of experts. The evaluator must be familiar with the art of translation and must be aware of the needs and demands of the children. To get the best from different languages one has to search and select. For this, more and more competitions in different languages should be organised and awards should be given to encourage original writing at the national and international level.

Competitions and awards for translators should also be introduced so that more people get interested in learning different languages.

To get more books translated publishers should come forward. Though the publisher's main interest is to make money, there is lesser risk in publishing translated books. Original works are already tried in the local market and the children are all alike. The difference is in the opportunities and exposure they get. Bestsellers of one language can be easily translated into other languages.

We have deep roots of children's literature in Indian culture. There has been a long tradition, both oral and written, in the form of *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesh*, *Tales of Birbal*, *Tenaliram* and *Betal Pachisi* etc. The *Panchatantra* has been translated into a number of foreign languages. Orally, these stories have reached far and wide and have been written in other languages.

There is a rich treasurehouse of modern and traditional literature in India. We would like all the children of the world to share this joy of reading them. Conversely, we would like our children to be able to enjoy the world's greatest stories for children through good translations.

Most of all, we loved to listen to stories. My mother's throat often grew sore reading aloud to us so much.

The best of being read to was that we were never tied to any age group and our taste could range from Beatrix Potter to Dickens with little difficulty.

Elizabeth Chesley Baity